

TESTIMONY

IN SUPPORT OF SB 949, and  
IN SUPPORT OF HB 6408

ATTORNEY ERIC R. BROWN  
COUNSEL AND LOBBYIST  
AFSCME COUNCIL 15, AFL-CIO

BEFORE THE LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES COMMITTEE OF THE  
CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY

FEBRUARY 24, 2011

Ladies and Gentlemen of the committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak **in favor of House Bill 949** today – **An Act Concerning Pension Offsets Under the Worker's Compensation Act**. I am staff counsel for the Connecticut Council of Police Unions, AFSCME Council 15, AFL-CIO, representing close to 4000 police officers from 60 municipalities in the state of Connecticut.

This bill proposes to ensure that specific award benefits made payable to recipients of municipal pensions be paid in full, and not be used as an offset against pension benefits.

Workers' compensation benefits consist of three main components. They are payment of medical expenses; wage replacement; and the specific award.

There are municipal pension plans which require that payment of pension benefits be offset in full by the payment of any workers' compensation benefits payable to the beneficiary. While such an offset may arguable make sense in the context of wage replacement benefits, it makes no sense in the context of Specific Award benefits.

The Specific Award is designed to compensate a recipient for the loss of use of a body part. It has no relationship to wage replacement, or to the collection of a pension benefit. It is payment to an individual who has lost a part of use of his body as a result of the performance of his labor. No entity should be able to take a credit for such a hardship.

Currently, the city of Waterbury utilizes this type of offset to effectively reduce pension payments to disabled individuals who collect specific awards. The offset for the most serious of injuries can reach close to one hundred thousand dollars.

We do not believe that any entity should receive a windfall as a result of the loss of use of a body part and we ask you to support this bill.

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I am also here to speak in favor of **HB 6408 – An Act Concerning Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and the Worker's Compensation Act**. We represent employees who frequently suffer the damaging effects of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in the performance of their duties. The disease is real, and the effects of the disease have a significant impact on the employees who suffer from it. To this point, workers' compensation benefits have only been available to these employees if they could show a physical injury that went along with the mental suffering.

But in the context of police work, where officers are called upon to aid sick and injured children and families, to fight off killers and protect the public, frequently the mental injuries stand alone without any physical injury.

This bill recognizes the real impacts of post-traumatic stress in the workplace, and Connecticut should provide for compensation for workers who suffer from this real disease.